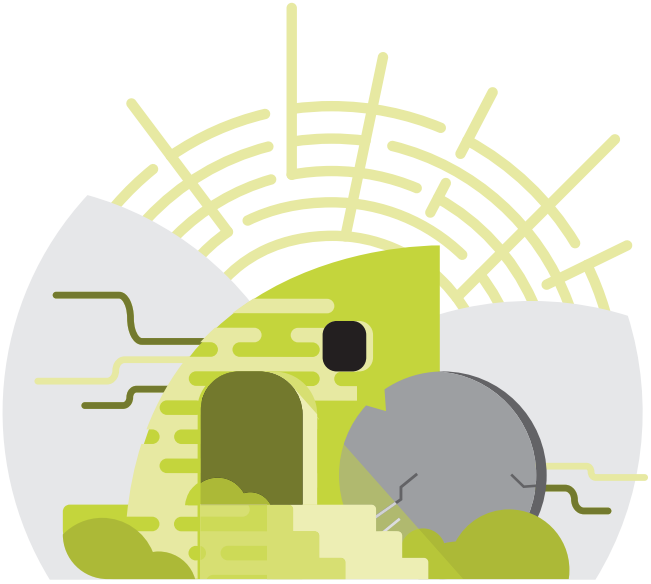


Unit .08

Bonus Session

Fear Gives Way

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. **2** There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. **4** The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. **5** The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you." **8** So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. **9** Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus' resurrection is a life-changing event.

Option 1

For many of us, the story of the resurrection of Jesus is quite familiar; for some, perhaps even too familiar. We have studied it. We have heard it preached. We have witnessed musical productions based on it. We have even watched movies about it. And with this familiarity can often come the feeling of knowing all there is to know about this story.

But our goal is not to merely understand the details of this story; it is for this story to change us. The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of the gospel, a gospel that is designed to move us from death to life when we trust in Christ and then to shape us more into the image of Christ, the One we follow, each day. No, we have not heard this story enough. We cannot hear this story enough. If anything, this is a story we need to hear more.

- **What are some things in life you cannot hear or experience enough? Why?**

The crucifixion of Jesus was one of the darkest moments the world had ever seen. Jesus was dead. His followers were frightened, confused, and scattered. But as the sun began to rise on Sunday morning, the first disciples would come to see that God had brought beauty from ashes: the Son had risen. And with His resurrection, everything had changed.

Option 2

Every good fight story involves at least one point at which you think the hero is defeated. Sherlock Holmes tumbles to his apparent death in "The Reichenbach Fall" episode of the BBC TV series, *Sherlock*. In *The Matrix*, Neo lies at the feet of Agent Smith riddled with bullets. *The Empire Strikes Back* concludes with Han Solo encased in carbonite and Luke Skywalker nursing a severed hand. And really, what kind of story would it be if the bell rang and Rocky immediately knocked out Ivan Drago?

- **What are some other movies or series you enjoy that have a cliffhanger or surprising turn of events?**

For the three days after Jesus' crucifixion, it would seem like real life did not much resemble fiction. The Hero of this story was not merely lying on the mat; He was lying in a tomb. Hope trickled out of the disciples' hearts and minds as blood and water seeped from the Savior's side. There was no getting around the bitter reality that He was dead. But then came Sunday.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Matthew 28:1-6

Matthew 28 begins early on a Sunday morning, just before dawn broke over Jerusalem. Jesus had been crucified on the Friday before, and His body hastily prepared for burial. Now that the Sabbath was complete, some of women who followed Jesus were returning to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body (Mark 16:1), but they would not find the One they were looking for. At least, not in the tomb.

- **What thoughts do you think were racing through the minds of the women as they approached the tomb that morning?**

As you look at this resurrection passage, try to align your imagination and affections with Mary, likely the mother of James and Joseph (Matt. 27:56), and Mary Magdalene. Imagine walking to the tomb of someone you cared about so deeply. You can't get the ghastly sight of Jesus on the cross out of your mind and you are bracing yourself to see His lifeless, cold body once more. But, in an instant, your heavy heart and concerns give way to something else: fear. As you approach the tomb, the earth heaves and rattles as an angel soars down from heaven with the tomb of the Son of God in his sights. It doesn't matter that a Roman task force guards the tomb; this angel came to proclaim the greatest news ever uttered and nothing and no one would get in his way.

- **Matthew describes the appearance of the angel as that of "lightning." What does this communicate?**

The angel rolled back the stone of Jesus's tomb, not to let Jesus out, but to let others in. And then, wonderfully and casually, he disrespected the stone, and the death it represents, by sitting on it. Death's power had been vanquished. Death's finality had been erased. Death, and its antecedent, sin, had been crushed by the One who had merely borrowed this tomb. What was once used to seal in a dead man, was now a chair, an ordinary rock to sit on and share the news of Jesus' body being gone.

The angel had a message for the women—a glorious message of victory—but before he could share it, he first calmed their fears. The Roman guards were not the only ones consumed with fear at his presence; the women too seemed to have replaced their sorrow with fear. But not for long. The fear would give way to something greater, something beautiful: belief in the risen Savior. And so the angel told the women not to be afraid. They did not need to fear him or the death that had been vanquished on this very site. Jesus was no longer dead and buried; He had risen. The stone was removed so that they could peer inside and see for themselves. There was no discarded body in the tomb; Jesus was using it.

If Christ's resurrection was not physical—a bodily one—it was no resurrection at all. Jesus died in the body; He had to rise again in the body. Our sins are committed in our bodies; Jesus had to rise again for our justification in His body (Rom. 4:25). Resurrection is more than the reversal of death—it's Jesus crushing death in His new body (Gen. 3:15). Jesus conquered death for us, ensuring an eternal life for us in new resurrected bodies in which we will never perish (John 3:16). But first we must believe.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus' resurrection is a life-changing event.

Matthew 28

4. In this moment, the elite Roman soldiers did not attack, run back to Pilate, or call for back up. They were overcome by fear: Angel-phobia. Matthew paints a vivid and beautiful picture of these fearful and collapsed soldiers who were "like dead men." At this gravesite on this morning, these living, breathing, but paralyzed Roman soldiers were closer to death than the One who had laid in the tomb hours before. Up from the grave Christ arose!

5-6. Everything hinges on that empty tomb. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, the apostle Paul was clear: if Jesus is still dead, then we are still dead in our sins. But since there isn't a corpse of Christ, we are alive in Him, forgiven of our sins, and condemnation no longer remains because Christ undid death. The exalted Jesus ensures our joy and sustains it.

The forgiveness God extended to you is complete and firm because Jesus' body isn't decomposed. Your salvation is forever secure because Christ, in resurrected bodily form, is seated on the throne in Heaven interceding on your behalf right this moment. You don't have to fear that God will not accept you; the cross and the empty tomb bear witness that He has already, in Christ. The cross shows Jesus' love for us. The empty tomb shows the power of that love. Christ's love for you endures because He does—and that is why our joy lives on as well; it is fixed on the reality of the resurrection, not anything we might, or might not, experience in life.

The blessings of the gospel—forgiveness, new life, no condemnation, adoption, righteousness, and so much more—are all bundled together in the resurrected Christ. As is joy. Because we are a forgiven people, we find joy. Because we have been given new life, and the old is gone, we find joy. Because we are no longer under God's condemnation, we find joy. Because we have been adopted by God and are coheirs with Jesus, we find joy. Because we have been given Christ's perfect righteousness to replace our imperfect righteousness, we find joy. But above all, our salvation is about being with Christ, and just as His death was not the end for Him, nor will our death be the end for us. This is our source of unending joy.

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 64, DDG)*

Christ's Humiliation

Although God the Son is equal with God and worthy of all the glory God receives, He chose to humble Himself by taking on human flesh. He left His glorious state and came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), and He experienced a humiliating death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8) by becoming sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

TEACHING PLAN

- **Why does it matter that Jesus's resurrection is physical and not just spiritual?**
- **What emotions and expectations would you have had on that first Easter morning?**

The angel told the women that they need not fear any longer and invited them to enter into the tomb, to enter into faith in the resurrected Savior. But they were not to remain there. They had received good news—great news—and they were not to keep it to themselves.

Read Matthew 28:7-10

The two Marys heard the angel's invitation to inspect the place where Jesus had laid, saw the empty garden tomb, and obeyed the angel's charge to tell the rest of the disciples the good news. And again, we cannot miss the state of their hearts as they went. They didn't go to the others in drudgery. They didn't need prodding. They didn't debate why they should go. Though they had a mix of fear and joy in their hearts, joy won the day and so they went. Their joy in the risen Jesus propelled them forward in obedience, but it was just beginning. Before they could tell anyone, they met someone else along the way.

As the two women hurried away from the empty tomb and their encounter with the angel, their heads were likely spinning and their hearts racing. It is not everyday one meets an angel announcing the resurrection. It was quite a bit to process. Could it be true? How? Why?

But they didn't get far before their meeting with the angel was eclipsed in wonder and splendor. The two women came face-to-face, which became face-to-foot, with Christ. Notice that Jesus did not tell the two women anything the angel had not told them already. In one sense, Jesus was clarifying that the angel had spoken on His behalf with His authority—the command the angel uttered was not his own, but Christ's. But this encounter was more than that. The empty tomb had been compelling evidence of the resurrection, but this brief encounter with Jesus was undeniable evidence. Jesus was alive! And He had given them a mission; one they would fulfill (Matt. 28:11).

Because Jesus is alive, He has not only changed us, He has also given us a mission, part of the reason we are changed. We now live as His disciples, making much of Him, spreading His name to the ends of the earth. The resurrected Jesus isn't just good news for one people in one place and one time, it is for all people, in all places, of all time. We have been given the same orders: "Don't be afraid. Go tell others about Me."

- **Where is the risen Jesus calling you to obedience to tell someone else about Him?**

Activity

Break students into groups and have them research evidences for the resurrection. If you are using the Leader Pack for this quarter, be sure to check out the poster pack item for this session for content surrounding evidences for the resurrection.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus' resurrection is a life-changing event.

Matthew 28

7-8. These verses record the third use of "fear" in this passage. First, the guards were shaken by fear at the sight of the angel (v. 4). Then the angel told the women not to fear (v. 5). Now, we read that the women left with joy, and fear (v. 8). It seems that, understandably, they were not able to rid themselves of all their fear, although joy was beginning to overshadow it.

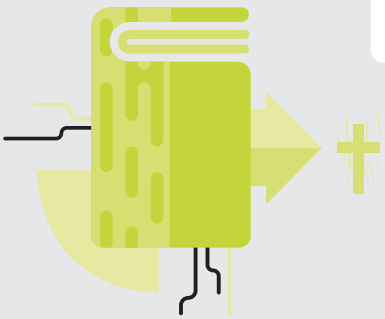
But just as the women were to cast aside fear, as the angel had instructed, in another sense, they were to increase in fear, as should we. When the Bible speaks of fear, it employs two meanings. The first is what we perhaps think of most naturally—a literal fear of something or someone. In this account, the Roman soldiers and women were literally afraid of the angel—of his appearance at least, and likely an intuitive awareness of the power and authority given to him by God. Likewise, there is a sense in which we fear God in this way—we fear His holiness, His judgment, His power. We see this throughout Scripture, notably when someone was in the presence of God, such as Isaiah (see Isa. 6:1-7). This fear is right and proper—apart from Christ. But in Christ, we no longer need to fear God in this way. Because we have been given Christ's righteousness, we can approach God with confidence and assurance (Heb. 4:14-16). There is no place to fear God's condemnation, because it no longer has bearing over us (Rom. 8:1).

But as this fear leaves, another fear, the second type of fear the Bible speaks of, takes its place. This is a healthy fear of God Himself—a keen awareness of His character that forces us to take Him seriously. To give Him the glory—the weightiness—due Him. To love and respect Him.

Just like joy, this fear also is rooted in Christ's work. As we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), we will grow in our fear of God—a fear not of what God could do to us to judge our sin, but what He has done for us to forgive our sin in Christ Jesus. And then with joy and this fear, we seek to obey the One who has done so much for us.

(p. 65, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus rose from the dead just as He said He would, proving that He is the Son of God and is worthy of our worship. When we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we are brought into God's family and can joyfully serve Him.



FEAR GIVES WAY

Jesus' resurrection is a life-changing event.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

BOLDNESS – Choosing to do the right thing, even if you are afraid.

HEAD

What did the women at the tomb see and hear?

The women came to the tomb in great sadness and confusion. How did their feelings change when they heard the news that Jesus rose from death?

HEART

The women came to the tomb sad and scared, but they left with great joy and a message to share. Why did learning that Jesus is alive result in such a complete change?

Jesus' resurrection means that we, like the women, do not have to be afraid. Why does the fact that Jesus is alive mean we can face every moment of our lives with boldness?

HANDS

Boldness does not mean we act arrogantly or take crazy risks. It means we aren't afraid to do what's right. Choose one of the suggested actions below (or think of one on your own) and pray that God will help you do it with boldness. Look for an opportunity to put it into action this week.

- Support a friend or classmate who is being made fun of
- Choose someone first who is often picked last for your team in class, for gym or in a group activity
- Try a new activity that you've always wanted to do but are afraid you'll fail at
- Tell a friend, family member, neighbor or classmate what you're learning about God